

INDONESIA

THE GROWTH OF FEDERALISM IN INDONESIA

When, after VJ-day, Indonesia's 75 million people embarked on the adventure of creating a new, independent state, one of the greatest challenges they took up was the building of a new national unity, a unity that will no longer depend upon Dutch rule but which henceforth can spring only from the Indonesians themselves.

The coming United States of Indonesia must hold together a widely scattered and heterogeneous population made up of seventeen major ethnic groups with 150 recognized subgroups, speaking 25 languages and 250 dialects. Some of these groups, such as the Javanese, Sundanese, Madurese, Balinese, Alorese and Dayaks, can properly be called separate nationalities, by virtue of their large numbers, distinct languages, cultures, and their desires to develop their own particular customs and institutions.

In fashioning durable common ties the various peoples of the Archipelago face two alternatives: they can come together in a voluntary federal union, as did the original thirteen states of the U. S. A., or they can be united under a single ascendant group who, like the 30 million Javanese, have the numbers to dominate their fellow Indonesians. Both alternatives have their supporters. Most Javanese leaders and some other groups favor a centralized state in which the Javanese would inevitably play the paramount role, while many leaders of the 45 million non-Javanese give ever greater support to a federation of autonomous states. Which tendency will predominate is not yet clear, but that both are strong is evident from the history of Indonesian nationalism.

SEPARATE CULTURES

Despite an increasing awareness, especially in the last 40 years, of being Indonesians, the islands' peoples have retained strong feelings of cultural consciousness, of being Sundanese, Javanese, Ambonese or Dayaks. Indeed, before World War II the term "Indonesia" was only beginning to come into common use. Thus, although the islands and peoples of Indonesia have a centuries-old history, Indonesia itself is a very recent creation. In modern times, since the decline of the Mojopahit empire in the fifteenth century, the 3,100 islands of the East Indies have known no common rule except that introduced by the Dutch.

Though mostly of coastal Malay stock, the peoples of the Archipelago show characteristics of an earlier indigenous population, having also mixed with mountain Malay types and towards the east with Papuans. When one realizes that in Europe various ethnic strains developed, it is no wonder that on the isolated islands and fertile valleys of the Indies, successive migratory waves interbred in many combinations, to produce a great number of easily distinguishable types. Furthermore, physical isolation led not

only to ethnic diversity, but also to the growth of distinct languages and culture patterns, which persist to this day.

This cultural diversity has put its imprint on Indonesian nationalism, giving rise to a number of parallel movements having the common aim of independence, but each seeking to foster and preserve the language and customs of its own people. These movements were seldom opposed to one another, because before the war there was no question of one Indonesian people dominating another, but their existence did show the reluctance of, for instance, Madurese and Sundanese, to merge their nationalist aspirations with those of the more numerous Javanese.

NATIONALIST MOVEMENTS

Merely listing the many prewar nationalist movements of Indonesia reveals the persistent strength of cultural consciousness among its peoples, and shows also the well-established roots of present-day federalism in Indonesia.

On the island of Madura, off Java's north-east tip, the most powerful Javanese movements failed to attract strong support, but in 1920 Madurese intellectuals founded Perserikatan Madura, advocating higher living standards and encouragement of Madurese cultural growth. In 1925, at Surabaya, East Java, where live nearly three million Madurese, the Sarekat Madura was formed, appealing exclusively to that population group. Another group, Persatuan Rakjat Madura, was formed in 1932, showing again that this people sought expression for its own special aspirations.

Since the war Madurese feeling has been accentuated. The Republic of Indonesia, formed in 1945 on Java, Madura and Sumatra, prohibited the seafaring and fishing population of Madura from taking to the sea, a measure designed to prevent the Madurese from leaving their island, where starvation was taking a heavy toll, and sailing to the nearby Dutch-held port of Surabaya. This prohibition and the Republic's failure to send enough of its surplus rice to the island, created such strong anti-Javanese feelings that the Madurese who reached Surabaya asked for arms with which to avenge themselves. In time their resentment assumed a more constructive form when an autonomy movement was organized by the mainland Madurese, later spreading to the island itself.

SUDANESE AUTONOMISTS

As on Madura, the Sundanese autonomy movement is an outgrowth of pre-war Sundanese nationalism, with its roots deep in the culture and traditions of 11 million Sundanese of West Java. The Sundanese, of distinct ethnic stock and with their own language and customs, have always had close contact with the neighboring Javanese, but have

consciously sought to maintain their own way of life. Sundanese nationalism took organized form in September, 1914, when the Pagujuban Pasundan was founded. Under the leadership of Oto Iskander Dinata and Asikin Nata Nagara, the Pagujuban Pasundan was before the war the strongest independence movement in West Java.

The Sundanese autonomy movement gained real strength in reaction against Republican attempts to crush all pro-Sundanese feeling. Republican forces in 1945 kidnapped Oto Iskander Dinata and Asikin Nata Nagara, who have not been heard of since. Other prominent Sundanese leaders were also kidnapped and intimidated, and when the Republic controlled West Java, it appointed almost exclusively Javanese officials to administer the area. As a result many Sundanese became, not anti-nationalist, but pro-autonomy for the Sundanese within a federal United States of Indonesia.

The Serikat Sumatra, started about 1920 by Minangkabau residents of Batavia, gained considerable support in Sumatra. Seeking economic independence for Sumatrans, it withstood efforts to subdue it by PNI, a Javanese nationalist group.

The Ambonese, mostly Protestant Christians, living on the island of Ceram, Ambon and Banda, and having their own language and culture, have supported a number of movements which, like Mena Muria, Sou Maluka Ambon and Serikat Ambon, sought not only cultural development and social betterment, but also unity of the peoples of the Moluccas. In 1929 the Moluccas Political Association was formed, asking autonomy for the Moluccas within an Indonesian federation.

Between 1912 and 1923, the Minahassa of North Celebes, organized three different movements, and in 1924 the Perserikatan Timor was founded to speak for the interests of the Timorese. There were other local groups of lesser importance scattered throughout the Archipelago,

having common aspirations to independence, yet each striving to preserve the integrity and individual character of its people.

NATIONALISM IN JAVA

From its earliest beginnings Javanese nationalism has sought to absorb or dominate other Indonesian nationalist movements. Sarekat Islam, organized in 1912, claimed to speak for all Indonesian Moslems, but found that it had to base its strength primarily on the Javanese. In 1927 a group called PPPKI had greater success in uniting Indonesians by creating a federation of several separate nationalist movements. Nevertheless, many non-Javanese nationalist movements, such as the Persatuan Minahassa of Celebes, considered membership in PPPKI incompatible with their aspirations to autonomy.

Today Indonesia is in process of resolving the question inherent in its cultural diversity, the question of whether Indonesia's varied peoples shall develop their respective cultures within the framework of a voluntary federation, or whether they shall lose their identity under the domination of a single group. That federalism is ideally suited to a mixed population like Indonesia's is amply clear, and it is also evident that cultural consciousness among the Archipelago's peoples provides a firm foundation for federal institutions. Furthermore, the Republic, in the Linggadjati Agreement of 1947 and the Renville Agreement of 1948 has accepted the federal principle, though originally wishing it to be restricted to three states, the Republic, East Indonesia and Borneo. In addition Madura, West Java (the Sundanese), East Sumatra and a federation of Banka, Billiton and the Riouw islands have been organized as autonomous territories.

Whether these additional areas and perhaps others will become members of the United States of Indonesia (U. S. I.) will depend upon the strength of autonomy movements there, and whether the U. S. I. will prove to be a stable union will in turn depend upon the leadership of its autonomous member states.

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